



ARE LATER CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ABORTION?

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Can an abortion affect one's parenting skills?

Obviously, if women and men are having emotional problems because of their past abortions, this is going to have an impact on their families. For example, women who have had an abortion are more likely to report subsequent substance abuse. Clearly, alcoholism and drug abuse have a negative impact on families.

Women who have had abortions are also more likely to become depressed for long periods of time. This, like other prolonged reactions to abortion, can affect children's emotional development, which is modeled on their parents'.

A past abortion can also have a direct impact on one's parenting "style." For example, in one study of women who had post-abortion problems, nearly half reported that they feared they would be "punished" for their abortions by some harm coming to their other children.

In many cases, these women choke back their love and are afraid to bond with their children. They fear that if they love their children "too much," they'll be punished by losing them.

Conversely, nearly half of the women in this study reported a "compulsion to be a perfect mother." These tendencies have led many women to report that they have become overly protective and "smothering" of their subsequent children. They too may be motivated by a fear of harm coming to their children, so they are deathly afraid of letting them out of their sight.

Unfortunately, some parents with unresolved grief want their born children to serve as "replacements" for the one who was aborted. This can result in the born children constantly being judged against the unattainable standard of "what might have been."

But aren't these problems offset by the fact that abortion has reduced child abuse by reducing the number of unwanted children?

This "fact" isn't a fact at all. Indeed, after decades of study, researchers haven't found a single shred of evidence to support the conclusion that abortion reduces the risk of child abuse. Instead, numerous studies have shown the opposite: *a history of abortion is statistically associated with higher rates of child abuse.*

These findings are supported by clinical experience. A substantial number of women and men seeking post-abortion therapy have described a link between their unresolved post-abortion feelings and patterns of emotional or physical abuse of their subsequent children.

One woman described feelings of intense rage whenever her newborn baby cried: "I did not understand why her crying would make me so angry. She was the most beautiful baby, and had such a placid personality. What I didn't realize then was that I hated my daughter for being able to do all these things that my lost [aborted] baby would never be able to do."

Are you saying abortion can cause child abuse?

Yes. The reasons for child abuse are complex, and can't be fully dealt with here. But let me make a couple of quick points.

Difficulty bonding with subsequent children because of fear, shame, or guilt is commonly reported by post-abortion parents. Lack of adequate bonding is also one of the most significant risk factors for child abuse. When inadequate bonding is combined with feelings of anger and rage, which are common aftereffects of abortion, a dangerous mix can result.

In some rare instances, abortion can also lead to complete emotional breakdown with tragic results. Renee Nicely of New Jersey experienced a "psychotic episode" the day after her abortion which resulted in the beating death of her three-year-old son, Shawn. She told the court psychiatrist that she "knew that abortion was wrong" and that she "should be punished for the abortion." Unfortunately, Shawn became the victim of her pain and guilt.

Sadly, in years to come it may be shown that post-abortion trauma was a major cause of the dramatic rise in child abuse cases in the last two decades.

Can abortion have an impact on siblings who were already born?

Yes. Some children experience "survivor guilt" over the abortion of a sibling. They feel guilty that they were the ones "chosen" by their parents to live. Some may even feel that they are responsible for the abortion of their sibling; if they had not been "so much trouble," perhaps their parents would not have felt it necessary to abort "another burdensome child."

One expert in the treatment of child abuse, Dr. Philip Ney, has noted that children who know they were "wanted" may not feel they were simply "welcomed" for who they are. This subtle shift, from being unconditionally "welcomed" into a family toward being "wanted" to satisfy their parents' expectations, may have a lasting impact on the child's self-perception.

Dr. Martha Shuping, M.D., is a psychiatrist with more than ten years of experience in helping women with post-abortion issues. Supporting citations are posted at www.afterabortion.org

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Q6: Was there a period after your abortion when you experienced an increase in the use of alcohol or drugs? Have you experienced other forms of emotional deadening?

Have you experienced any suicidal thoughts? Do you take risks that put your life in danger? Have you developed any eating disorders?

Q7: Do you have trouble finding, building, or maintaining good relationships with people of the opposite sex? Do you have trouble with issues of trust and control?

Do you get involved in hurtful or abusive relationships? Do you tolerate abuse because you feel you don't deserve any better?

Q8: Have you lost the desire for sexual intercourse? Do you have increased pain during intercourse?

Have you become promiscuous because of low self-esteem?

Have you lost a previous desire to have children, or are you filled with an anxious desire to have a child as soon as possible?

Q9: Do you experience periods of depression, heightened anxiety, or cramping during certain months of the year, particularly during the months that would correspond to the month of your abortion or the due date of the aborted pregnancy?

Q10: Did you have a faith in God that you have now lost? Are you afraid of God? Are you angry at God? Have you rejected your religion for emotional rather than thoughtful reasons?

Post-Abortion Stress Quiz Answer key:

If you have answered yes to three or more of the previous questions, post-abortion counseling may help. Skilled and understanding people, many of whom have been through the same things you are going through now, want to help. Many services are free. See page 2 for a list of referral centers.



www.afterabortion.org